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The Pursuit of Waldheim

I must admit that the continuing pursuit of Kurt Waldheim—even beyond correcting the wartime record he tried so long to hide—troubles me. Waldheim, the former U.N. Secretary-General who is now president of Austria, is as ill cut out for the villain's role now insisted upon by commentators as he is for the heroic role he failed to play nearly 50 years ago as a young lieutenant in German army intelligence. Waldheim failed, with millions of others, to resist when the Jews of Austria and the Balkans were being dehumanized—and worse. It was a failure of moral duty. No one questions that. But why, apart from his having the call to run for president of Austria, and then refuse to resign, is he singled out for special opprobrium?

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Due to my own inaccessibility on the other day from Prof. Richard Wallach's reflections on the case for and against Waldheim, and the fact that the commission of distinguished historians recently charged by the Austrian government to examine the evidence Waldheim himself had called for the commission, yet its conclusions were damning, indeed.

According to Wallach, the documents expose Waldheim's lies of innocence, inattention and ignorance. Waldheim once denied even being on the scene in the Balkan atrocities at all. He said he had been quietly studying law in Vienna. He was forced to abandon that pretense. He says he has been pushed from others.

Wallach summed the case by Waldheim's

aware that the documents would tell a "stirring and damning story." As a historian, Wallach concludes, "I lack the proper tools to grapple with this case. It is probably a problem to be handled by psychologists."

This is surely Socratic modesty. Wallach obviously knows that useful clues to Waldheim's inferior behavior were provided by that deepest of all speculators on the human psyche, Sigmund Freud. Waldheim's fellow Viennese

Freud's speculations centered upon the vast human capacity for evading one's rising wound, one's guilty experience and memory—by tucking them away, forgotten, in the unconscious, or by devices of forgetfulness and denial. Freud viewed these devices as shields for the ego against the glare of shame. No moral person can bear to be a villain in his own eyes.

Freud would have understood full well why Waldheim has been so busy merrily merrily his wartime records and memories. And, four decades later, Freud's notion of "more over" would probably be more mercurial than ours. He knew that a capacity for heroic commitment, with one's discreditable secrets, for anti-unity to be a villain. Had Waldheim been such a hero, he would have been a Kurt Waldheim, not a Waldheim. But the first place—the place of his resistance, the resistance, the refusal to resist, the heroic routine in the face of terrible crimes.

Yet, then, one has said and said a large puzzle remains. By what standards, exactly? Waldheim is condemned for knowledge of a policy he might make and had to power to thwart. Wallach says that Waldheim did not know about the fate of the 50,000 Jews being shipped out of Salonika. It is less certain what he could have done about it.

In his book, "The Terrible Secret," Walter Laqueur has established conclusively that the deadly nature of Hitler's program of the extermination of European Jews was known here and in Europe by 1942. Those who wished to know could know.

Great figures such as Roosevelt and Churchill were pressed to act to stop the deportations—even by rubbing the salt in. Yet they took courage in disbelief, evasion and inaction.

Waldheim, by a sense, a guilty man. But historic guilt has to be proportioned to the degree of one's personal options and one's ability to act. By that standard, to read Waldheim wholly out of civilized society while excusing others who had far greater powers to act seems a bit one-sided.

But Waldheim in Group 1 of the Wehrmacht seems guilty in the main, of being a petty player in a drama whose immeasurable evil he lacked the imagination to measure, the courage to resist. His forgetfulness, as Prof. Wallach calls it, is more human than heroic. But Freud knew being more human than heroic is a constant and universal liability for us all—especially in wartime.

Richard Cohen

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a Man for Our Times

notorious army stationed in the Balkans has
own knowledge of atrocities - these were not
addressed by the Army Minister at the time.
(Others had mentioned it before). Almost all
general Jewish population of Salonika Greece
where Walther was in command during the war
was reported as missing and killed. When
population - no absence of staff in city
population not his missing from the Balkans
and No other German or Czech units

The small, new Washington, D. C., office of the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) is a place where the world's most famous peace workers are busy with the problems of the world's most famous peace workers. The AFSC is a non-profit organization that has been working for peace since 1917. It is a member of the American Red Cross and the American Peace Society. The AFSC is a member of the American Red Cross and the American Peace Society. The AFSC is a member of the American Red Cross and the American Peace Society.

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most people went about their business. Waldheim's man for our times, he said, he could take residence in almost any country. He could be a Chilean today, an Argentine during the terror, a Hungarian apparition in Czechoslovakia, a bureaucrat who implemented the reforms of the Prague Spring, and stayed to implement the subsequent excesses of the Frenchmen in Algeria. Guzman under Bahkretor Castro, Nicaragua for any regime, a Russian who served Stalin and now serves Gorbachev. Waldheim said, "I am completely two-faced" — the master cynicist that said he could be Woodrow Wilson, he could be Adolf Waldheim went from lieutenant in the German army to United Nations secretary-general, from a boy in a killing machine to a peacemaker for the world. In every job he did his job. No one could fault him. His job was never always in order, his job might be a mess, but his dealers came. He was a great money Waldheim, without having ever met him. He wrote of the ruler whose weapons really functioned, whose morality is measured by enemies. Someone like him, I said, the man that sent Khrushchev to the Kremlin, Alchoviz, Khrushchev about half the Waldheim.

So, Austria provides a service. The donor, pinch a piece of Waldheim's story that is the devil, but of almost anyone. And little is gained. Austria is not some iniquitous country, but almost any country. Within Austria, as well as without, there are calls for Waldheim's resignation, but really, that would be a waste. He should stay where he is, as the 13 and 14 embarrasment of Austria, but ultimately, a reminder that the son of Mrs. Waldheim, who

But Waldheim said nothing about himself. The wartime record he once lied about, his service in